NUMB. I

The SPECTATOR.

Non fumum ex fulgore, ſed ex fumo dare lucem
Cogitat, ut ſpecioſa dehinc miracula promat. Hor.

To be Continued every Day.

Thurſday, March 1. 1711.

I Have obſerved, that a Reader ſeldom peruſes a Book with Pleaſure 'till he knows whether the Writer of it be a black or a fair Man, of a mild or cholerick Diſpoſition, Married or a Batchelor, with other Particulars of the like nature, that conduce very much to the right Underſtanding of an Author. To gratify this Curioſity, which is ſo natural to a Reader, I deſign this Paper, and my next, as Prefatory Diſcourſes to my following Writings, and ſhall give ſome Account in them of the ſeveral Perſons that are engaged in this Work. As the chief Trouble of Compiling, Digeſting and Correcting will fall to my Share, I muſt do my ſelf the Juſtice to open the Work with my own Hiſtory.

I was born to a ſmall Hereditary Eſtate, which I find, by the Writings of the Family, was bounded by the ſame Hedges and Ditches in *William* the Conqueror's Time that it is at preſent, and has been delivered down from Father to Son whole and entire, without the Loſs or Acquiſition of a ſingle Field or Meadow, during the Space of ſix hundred Years. There goes a Story in the Family, that when my Mother was gone with Child of me about three Months, ſhe dreamt that ſhe was brought to Bed of a Judge: Whether this might proceed from a Law-Suit which was then depending in the Family, or my Father's being a Juſtice of the Peace, I cannot determine; for I am not ſo vain as to think it preſaged any Dignity that I ſhould arrive at in my future Life, though that was the Interpretation which the Neighbourhood put upon it. The Gravity of my Behaviour at my very firſt Appearance in the World, and all the Time that I ſucked, ſeemed to favour my Mother's Dream: For, as ſhe has often told me, I threw away my Rattle before I was two Months old, and would not make uſe of my Coral 'till they had taken away the Bells from it.

As for the reſt of my Infancy, there being nothing in it remarkable, I ſhall paſs it over in Silence. I find, that, during my Nonage, I had the Reputation of a very ſullen Youth, but was always a Favourite of my School-Maſter, who uſed to ſay, *that my Parts were ſolid and would wear well.* I had not been long at the Univerſity, before I diſtinguiſhed my ſelf by a moſt profound Silence: For, during the Space of eight Years, excepting in the publick Exerciſes of the College, I ſcarce uttered the Quantity of an hundred Words; and indeed do not remember that I ever ſpoke three Sentences together in my whole Life. Whilſt I was in this Learned Body I applied my ſelf with ſo much Diligence to my Studies, that there are very few celebrated Books, either in the Learned or the Modern Tongues, which I am not acquainted with.

Upon the Death of my Father I was reſolved to travel into Foreign Countries, and therefore left the Univerſity, with the Character of an odd unaccountable Fellow, that had a great deal of Learning, if I would but ſhow it. An inſatiable Thirſt after Knowledge carried me into all the Countries of *Europe*, where there was any thing new or ſtrange to be ſeen; nay, to ſuch a Degree was my Curioſity raiſed, that having read the Controverſies of ſome great Men concerning the Antiquities of *Egypt*, I made a Voyage to *Grand Cairo*, on purpoſe to take the Meaſure of a Pyramid; and as ſoon as I had ſet my ſelf right in that Particular, returned to my Native Country with great Satisfaction.

I have paſſed my latter Years in this City, where I am frequently ſeen in moſt publick Places, tho' there are not above half a dozen of my ſelect Friends that know me; of whom my next Paper ſhall give a more particular Account. There is no Place of publick Reſort, wherein I do not often make my Appearance; ſometimes I am ſeen thruſting my Head into a Round of Politicians at *Will's*, and liſtning with great Attention to the Narratives that are made in thoſe little Circular Audiences. Sometimes I ſmoak a Pipe at *Child's*; and whilſt I ſeem attentive to nothing but the *Poſt-Man*, over-hear the Converſation of every Table in the Room. I appear on *Sunday* Nights at St. *James's* Coffee-Houſe, and ſometimes join the little Committee of Politicks in the Inner-Room, as one who comes there to hear and improve. My Face is likewiſe very well known at the *Grecian*, the *Cocoa-Tree*, and in the Theaters both of *Drury-Lane*, and the *Hay-Market*. I have been taken for a Merchant upon

upon the *Exchange* for above these ten Years, and sometimes pass for a *Jew* in the Assembly of Stock-Jobbers at *Jonathan's*. In short, where-ever I see a Cluster of People I always mix with them, tho' I never open my Lips but in my own Club.

Thus I live in the World, rather as a Spectator of Mankind, than as one of the Species; by which means I have made my self a Speculative Statesman, Soldier, Merchant and Artizan, without ever medling with any Practical Part in Life. I am very well versed in the Theory of an Husband, or a Father, and can discern the Errors in the Oeconomy, Business, and Diversion of others, better than those who are engaged in them; as Standers-by discover Blots, which are apt to escape those who are in the Game. I never espoused any Party with Violence, and am resolved to observe an exact Neutrality between the Whigs and Tories, unless I shall be forc'd to declare my self by the Hostilities of either side. In short, I have acted in all the parts of my Life as a Looker-on, which is the Character I intend to preserve in this Paper.

I have given the Reader just so much of my History and Character, as to let him see, I am not altogether unqualified for the Business I have undertaken. As for other Particulars in my Life and Adventures, I shall insert them in following Papers, as I shall see occasion. In the mean time, when I consider how much I have seen, read and heard, I begin to blame my own Taciturnity; and since I have neither Time nor Inclination to communicate the Fulness of my Heart in Speech, I am resolved to do it in Writing; and to Print my self out, if possible, before I Die. I have been often told by my Friends, that it is Pity so many useful Discoveries which I have made, should be in the Possession of a Silent Man. For this Reason therefore, I shall publish a Sheet-full of Thoughts every Morning, for the Benefit of my Contemporaries; and if I can any way contribute to the Diversion or Improvement of the Country in which I live, I shall leave it, when I am summoned out of it, with the secret Satisfaction of thinking that I have not Lived in vain.

There are three very material Points which I have not spoken to in this Paper, and which, for several important Reasons, I must keep to my self, at least for some Time: I mean, an Account of my Name, my Age, and my Lodgings. I must confess I would gratify my Reader in any thing that is reasonable; but as for these three Particulars, though I am sensible they might tend very much to the Embellishment of my Paper, I cannot yet come to a Resolution of communicating them to the Publick. They would indeed draw me out of that Obscurity which I have enjoy'd for many Years, and expose me in publick Places to several Salutes and Civilities, which have been always very disagreeable to me; for the greatest Pains I can suffer, are the being talked to, and being stared at. It is for this Reason likewise, that I keep my Complexion and Dress, as very great Secrets; tho' it is not impossible, but I may make Discoveries of both in the Progress of the Work I have undertaken.

After having been thus particular upon my self, I shall in to-Morrow's Paper give an Account of those Gentlemen who are concerned with me in this Work. For, as I have before intimated, a Plan of it is laid and concerted (as all other Matters of Importance are) in a Club. However, as my Friends have engaged me to stand in the Front, those who have a mind to correspond with me, may direct their Letters *To the Spectator*, at Mr. *Buckley's* in *Little Britain*. For I must further acquaint the Reader, that tho' our Club meets only on *Tuesdays* and *Thursdays*, we have appointed a Committee to sit every Night, for the Inspection of all such Papers as may contribute to the Advancement of the Publick Weal.

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